

Breconshire Local & Family History Society (BLFHS)
Cymdeithas Hanes Lleol a Theuluoedd Brycheiniog



Newsletter 27 – October 2013

Welcome to our Newsletter. We invite you to contribute articles, tips, questions and answers for others to share. Feedback is always welcome. Have you missed an edition? Read the archived Newsletters on our website.

October Meeting Review

Arfon Williams: "Using Resources at the Regimental Museum in Brecon". Mr Williams, an ex-service man and volunteer at the museum, gave a very interesting talk about the methods and resources available at the museum and elsewhere for tracing the service history of our military ancestors. The audience appreciated his informal style but also acknowledged his wealth of knowledge on the subject. A sound recording of Mr Williams's talk is on the website (there were no slides).

Prior to the main talk, Helen Whyte gave a short, illustrated presentation on the latest Welsh parish records to appear on the FamilySearch.org website.

Coal mining in old Breconshire

It is easy to forget the coalmining heritage of the old county of Breconshire. Breconshire included the parish of Llanelly, which ran down into the Monmouthshire industrial valleys, Llanddetti, Faenor, and Penderyn, which bordered the Merthyr and Glamorgan Valleys and still includes the parish of Ystradgynlais, which included the collieries at Abercrave, Ystradgynlais and Coelbren, which bordered the Dulais Valley.

October 16th, 2013 marks the centenary of the disaster at the Universal Colliery, Senghenydd, near Caerphilly, the worst colliery disaster. It was caused by an underground explosion and led to the deaths of 439 men and boys. One hundred years on, as well as becoming a memorial to the Senghenydd victims, the site has become the National Memorial Garden commemorating all coal miners who have died in pit accidents in Wales.

Interestingly, Brecon was affected by the Senghenydd disaster. On the 16th October 1913, a report in *The Brecon & Radnor Express* gave the following summary (not totally accurate as it turned out):

AWFUL DISASTER
Senghenydd Death Blast

Men who descended	935
Brought up alive	489
Dead (including banksman)	15
Still in the mine	435

ARE BRECONIANS IN THE MINE

Inquiries made in Brecon on Wednesday go to show that there are relatives of several Brecon residents in the Senghenydd district, but in the case of some there is no evidence to show what their fate has been. Mr.Pritchard of Tithe Barn has a son working as a banksman at the pit, and at noon on Wednesday it was stated that although his mate had been killed, Mr.Pritchard was saved. Miss Havard, Llanfaes received a telegram on Tuesday stating that her brother who was on the night shift, came to the bank some two hours before the disaster. It is stated further that Mr. Sam Jones, of Llanfaes, was in the pit at the time of the explosion, but we have no information as to his safety. Mr. Beavan, of the Pearl Assurance Co., has a brother-in-law and two nephews working in the mine, and there are also cousins of Mrs. Beavan engaged at the same pit. At the time of writing Mr. and Mrs. Beavan are anxiously awaiting tidings of their relatives.

Does anyone have any idea who Mrs Beavan's relations working at Senghenydd were?

For further information about the disaster, the names of the deceased, and the memorial, use the following web links:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-24516312>

<http://www.welshcoalmines.co.uk/deathrolls/SenghenyddDead1913.htm>

<http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/rhagor/article/senghenydd/>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bOOIRCumkYM>

Can anyone answer these conundrums about Brecon?

- The old Girl's Grammar School and houses to its west and north were built on a field called *Cae Tobacco*. Why was the field so-called?
- The other strange one is "Sculptor's Yard" – no longer there but it was roughly from Ely Place in the Postern, continuing for about 200 yards in a southwesterly direction. I should imagine it was demolished when the Brecon & Neath Railway was constructed. Why was it called *Sculptors Yard*?

Please let me know if you have the answers to either of these questions.

Items for sale from the "Brecknock Beacon" – 25th. March 1889

- SEED OATS – A large quantity of Webb's Pedigree Prolific Black Tartar Oats for sale – Apply to T. Trew, Ship Street, Brecon.
- HORSE AND TRAP for sale at shortest notice – Apply S. Cooke, Black Lion Inn, Castle Street.
- PRIME STILTON CHEESE (own make) One or more to any address (strangers, cash with order) at 13d. per lb. Each cheese warranted and returnable – Apply W.S. Miller, Forest Lodge, Brecon.

Our website

John and Jennie have simplified the Public and Member's Welcome Pages. The pages now include direct links to:

- our NEWS pages, which provide details of the latest developments and additions;
- our NOTICEBOARD, which displays general announcements and forthcoming events.

NEXT MEETING

Date and time: Wednesday, 6th November 2013 at 2.00pm

Venue: Brecon Library

Subject: "Brecon Railways"

Arthur Robinson will tell us about the railways into Brecon. If you have any stories to tell, we would love to hear them.

Note: Prior to the main talk Helen Whyte will continue her series of short presentations on family history sources

BLFHS WEBSITE: Our website address: www.blfhs.co.uk

CONTACT DETAILS:

If you wish to respond to or comment on an item in this newsletter, or contribute to the next newsletter or to our website, please contact our Chairperson:

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